Met Office

NEWS

Has spring weather influenced your mood?

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With plenty of sunshine in the forecast for the next few days, late spring weather could help you get outside which may improve your mood, according to mental health charity Mind.

Despite recent sunny weather, much of early spring had been rather dull, wet and unsettled.

Early provisional figures from the Met Office suggest a largely dull season so far, with March in particular seeing much fewer sunshine hours than average.

Several counties in the south of the UK, including Devon, Somerset, Hampshire and Wiltshire had their dullest March on record in a series that goes back to 1910. In addition, England and Wales had their respective wettest Marches since 1981, and Northern Ireland its third wettest March on record.

While April's figures were closer to average, the fairly cloudy start to May means that the UK's weather has so far been duller than average, with sunshine figures still lagging behind the long-term average for the season, especially in England and Wales. However, with recent sunny weather and longer days at the close of spring, there's still some time for the figures to adjust.

The UK has so far (data up to 17 May) received 72% of average spring sunshine, with southern England being particularly dull, East Sussex for example having just 55% of the spring average with just a week and a half to go.

Weather and mood

The figures come at the conclusion of mental health awareness week in the UK. Information Content Manager at mental health charity Mind, Rosie Weatherley, said to BBC: "The weather can have a big impact on how we feel, especially when seasons change. A lack of daylight can impact our mood, especially during darker or rainier times of the year.

"When light hits the back of the eye, messages are passed to the part of the brain responsible for sleep, appetite, sex drive, temperature, mood, and activity. Without enough light, these functions are likely to slow down. When seasons change, we might find our mood or energy levels drop when it gets colder or warmer or we might notice changes in our sleeping or eating patterns."

Research from Mind suggests that being active outdoors can be particularly good for mental health and with plenty of sunny spells in the forecast for the coming week, there could be a good opportunity to reconnect with nature.

Rosie continued: "The colours, sounds, and smells of being in nature can stimulate the senses more than being in a gym - with one in four (25%) preferring to exercise outside. Despite this, as a nation, we can struggle to get outdoors, with one in five people only going outside once a week for exercise or outdoor activity. Additionally, nearly a third (28%) say that the traditionally poor British weather makes it hard to get outside.

"When the weather isn't so great, it can feel harder to get outdoors so be kind to yourself this time of year - set intentions, not hard rules. Even getting out for a little bit of time can do a lot."

Find out about Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) with Mind.

Get practical tips and advice for getting out and about safely this summer with WeatherReady.

What's behind the stats?

A Met Office Spokesperson said: "For much of spring, the UK has been positioned between dominant areas of high pressure to the southeast of Europe and to the far west of Europe. This pattern has led to periods of cool, wet and cloudy conditions over the UK with advancing weather fronts approaching largely from the Atlantic.

"Warmer than average sea surface temperatures also helped develop cloud, which has been quite a frequent visitor this season."

Dr Mark McCarthy, of the Met Office National Climate Information Centre, said: "It was a particularly dull and wet start to spring, and with April more in line with averages, there's plenty of time left this month to determine how spring 2023 will end up looking according to the weather and climate observations.

"Wales and the south of England have been particularly dull so far but with plenty of sunshine in the current forecast period, it could provide some welcome respite for some."

The season's full provisional figures will be published on 1 June.

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